

# THE COLONIAL NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 4411

Huntsville, Alabama

J. C. Spilman, Editor

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## ROCKET CITY

The purpose of the outline drawing at the left - the Saturn V rocket - is to call your attention to our new address on the masthead.

Huntsville, Alabama is the home of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's George C. Marshall Space Flight Center, and the Army Missile Command, and numerous industries supporting these agencies.

The professions of the technological nomads who edited this publication have led across the country from Massachusetts to California, then to Arkansas, and now to Rocket City - where one of the major tasks is the design of the rocket which will transport our astronauts to the moon, and return, in this decade. And so -- in this northeastern Alabama city where the earthshaking roar of powerful rocket engines is a commonplace occurrence -- The Colonial Newsletter has a new home.

## THIS ISSUE FEATURES

Edward R. Barnsley's first article of his new CONNECTICUT COPPERS series.

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## REPORTS, LETTERS, etc.

---from C. D. Grace

--enclosed is my contribution to The Colonial Newsletter, I really wish it could be more, as I feel strongly that such a worthwhile effort should be well supported by those who appreciate the effort. May I congratulate you on the excellent job you are doing in bringing to us not only the provocative new papers such as Mr. Sipsey's, but the interesting out-of-print works-



---from Robert J. Lindesmith

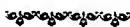
The Colonial Newsletter has helped me a great deal in my pet project which is a study of "Early American Medalists and Die Sinkers." I especially liked the discussion by Everett T. Sipsey titled New Facts and Ideas on the State Coinages.

--also, I have built my collection of coppers from the States of New Jersey and Connecticut to the point that any material in this regard is interesting --as I am fairly new to the Colonial field, I naturally like the reprints, and I find that any illustrations are a great help.



---from Frederick B. Taylor

--thanks for the latest issue of The Colonial Newsletter, 'tis a publication much needed, and enthusiasts about State coinage are deeply grateful --a bargain if ever I met one.



---from Joe Elliott

--enclosed is my contribution to help keep The Colonial Newsletter coming my way. As a student of American Colonial Numismatics for only seven years, each issue contains much needed information well worth this small contribution.



---from ye editor

--many thanks to all who have written. This sort of comment is encouraging. I only wish that time permitted a personal reply to the many others who have expressed their interest. Thanks. JCS

---- from B. Franklin

TO EDWARD BRIDGEN.

*On a Copper Coinage for the United States.*

Passy, 2 October, 1779.

DEAR SIR,

I received your favor of the 17th past, and the two samples of copper are since come to hand. The metal seems to be very good, and the price reasonable; but I have not yet received the orders necessary to justify my making the purchase proposed. There has indeed been an intention to strike copper coin, that may not only be useful as small change, but serve other purposes.

Instead of repeating continually upon every halfpenny the dull story that everybody knows, (and what it would have been no loss to mankind if nobody had ever known,) that George the Third is King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, &c. &c., to put on one side, some important proverb of Solomon, some pious moral, prudential or economical precept, the frequent inculcation of which, by seeing it every time one receives a piece of money, might make an impression upon the mind, especially of young persons, and tend to regulate the conduct; such as, on some, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*; on others, *Honesty is the best policy*; on others, *He that by the plough would thrive, himself must either hold or drive*; on others, *Keep thy shop, and thy shop will keep thee*; on others, *A penny saved is a penny got*; on others, *He that buys what he has no need of, will soon be forced to sell his necessaries*; on others, *Early to bed and early to rise, will make a man healthy, wealthy, and wise*; and so on, to a great variety.

The other side it was proposed to fill with good designs, drawn and engraved by the best artists in France, of all the different species of barbarity with which the English have carried on the war in America, expressing every abominable circumstance of their cruelty and inhumanity, that figures can express, to make an impression on the minds of posterity as strong and

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durable as that on the copper. This resolution has been a long time forborne; but the late burning of defenseless towns in Connecticut, on the flimsy pretence that the people fired from behind their houses, when it is known to have been premeditated and ordered from England, will probably give the finishing provocation, and may occasion a vast demand for your metal

I thank you for your kind wishes respecting my health. I return them most cordially fourfold into your own bosom. Adieu.

B. FRANKLIN.

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This letter is reprinted from Volume VIII of FRANKLIN'S WRITINGS by Jared Sparks, and was contributed by Mr. Everett T. Sipsey of Morristown, New Jersey. Mr. Sipsey comments that it is perhaps fortunate that the proposed coinage never came about. However, your editor would like to comment in this regard on the exhortation contained in the legends and devices which appear on the Fugio Cents of 1787 -- the first authorized copper coinage of the United States. The Fugios have long been credited to Benjamin Franklin and in earlier times were often described by cataloguers as "Franklin Cents".

The obverse Fugio legends, when considered in conjunction with the sun and sundial devices, present a message which readily suggests a number of sayings typical of Franklin, such as:

Time flies -- keep your eye on the store, or  
 -- keep your nose to the grindstone, or  
 -- make hay while the sun shines.

The reverse could certainly be considered a personification of Franklin's Albany Plan of Union!

In any event, it is interesting to contemplate the "Franklinisms" which might apply to the Fugios. Perhaps Franklin did indeed manage to implement his desire to "impress the minds, and regulate the conduct" through the mechanism of a copper coinage.

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**••• TECHNICAL NOTES •••**

In this issue we are initiating a series of short comments, observations, and the like which are submitted by our readers.

We believe that these selected items will be of substantial value to others interested in the particular series or events being discussed and have decided to dignify these comments by designating them as Technical Notes and assigning them an identifying number for ease of reference.

We hope that this medium will serve as an opportunity for those of our readers who wish to publish something less than a major paper in The Colonial Newsletter. After all, most of the important observations made these days are not of sufficient consequence to warrant the time and effort required for exhaustive treatment, and rather than wait innumerable years before communicating this information to others, why not do it now and share the pleasure of your observations?

As we publish the Technical Notes, we will assign a TN number, a short subject title, and identify the contributor. Your contributions for this series are invited.

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**TN-1 Metallic Composition of the Continental Currency  
(Walter Breen)**

On occasion I have made tests on the metallic composition of the Continental Currency so called Pewter Dollars, and I have found that they contain more than 95% tin, the exact quantities varying from one type to another, and in all likelihood the non-tin constituents appearing only as impurities. The intent seems to have been to produce a coinage in as nearly pure as possible tin, rather than pewter as commonly believed. Specific gravities range from about 7.15 for specimens which had obviously been exposed to cold, all the way up to about 7.45 or thereabouts for other specimens. One specimen seen by me, and submitted for authentication, was on a very wide irregular planchet, showing full border beading on reverse and obverse, and having a plain edge.

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# CONNECTICUT COPPERS

EDWARD R. BARNESLEY

Newtown, Pennsylvania



## ◆ Z REVERSES OF THE 1787 CONNECTICUT SERIES ◆

Numismatic identification of the numerous members of the Z family of reverse dies has always been a difficult and involved procedure because they vary so little in general appearance one from the other. The purpose of this article is to present, by means of an accompanying plate, a simple guide for their quick attribution according to a classification system developed by George R. Ross some forty-five years ago.

Sylvester Sage Crosby said there were twenty-three different varieties of reverse Z's, but he did nothing about classifying them numismatically. Dr. Thomas P. Hall subsequently discovered there were in fact twenty-four varieties.\* He assigned numbers to them, describing each die in detail, but unfortunately listed them all in 1892, one after the other in illogical sequence, without regard to rhyme or reason.

When Henry Clay Miller prepared his monumental work on the Connecticut series, he reused the old Hall numbers; but upon doing so must have realized it was very difficult to attribute an unknown variety against the twenty-four descriptions he had arranged in such desultory fashion. Consequently he stated that these Z dies fell into four natural Groups based upon the relative position of the lower dot of the last colon in the legend, as follows:

- (1). Distant from shield: 4, 5, 14, 15, 19, 20.
- (2). Close to shield: 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 21, 23.
- (3). Touches shield: 12.
- (4). Partly or wholly on shield: 7, 9, 18, 24.

\*More recently a twenty-fifth variety was discovered by Mr. Cyril H. Hawley, West Simsbury, Connecticut. It was fully described and illustrated in THE COLONIAL NEWSLETTER, Vol. II, No. 3, (July, 1961), P. 16.

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It is to be noted that Z.22 was omitted from the above grouping, - the reason being that this die has no terminal colon like the other members of its family! Although Extra Fine specimens of Z.22 do indeed show a slight irregularity in the field immediately left of the last cinquefoil, by no stretch of the imagination could this small, indistinct mark be called a colon.

The Miller grouping quoted above failed to clarify the situation, and has proved to be of little guidance in attributing unknown varieties of these difficult reverses, because of the indefinite relationships existing between the last colon and the shield. A much more precise formula is required because the Z's constitute the most important family of reverse dies in the entire Connecticut series. They alone are responsible for sixty-five different combinations, - all of them being paired with obverse 33's, except for three other dies, 32.4, 44, and 49.

It is therefore suggested that another arrangement be adopted, the one which was first conceived by George R. Ross and published by him in THE NUMISMATIST, Vol. 33, (Jan., 1920), P. 6. Dr. Ross of Lebanon, Pennsylvania, was evidently a friend and collaborator of Mr. Miller, because he was one of the five persons especially acknowledged for having rendered valuable assistance to the author of STATE COINAGE OF CONNECTICUT.

This Ross classification consists of five Groups, based upon the particular portion of the legend pointed to by the branch arm. Then the Groups are further divided and subdivided according to the position of the tip-most leaf on the branch. This may sound complicated, but it is actually a simple procedure to use in attributing unknown varieties. Branch details are usually well struck up, and are invariably the last feature to be worn away in much circulated coins. It is, therefore, no longer necessary to read all twenty-four descriptions in order to attribute an unknown die.

The following classification is condensed from Dr. Ross' original four-page article in THE NUMISMATIST:

**Group 1, HAND OPPOSITE COLON.**

Hand opposite colon, Z.14.

**Group 2, HAND OPPOSITE RIGHT SIDE OF E, AND SPACE  
BETWEEN E AND COLON.**

Top leaf opposite space between 2nd and 3rd cinquefoils, Z.21.  
Top leaf opposite 2nd cinquefoil, Z.17.

## Group 3, HAND OPPOSITE E.

Top leaf opposite space between 2nd and 3rd cinquefoils:

Top leaf points between 2nd and 3rd cinq. to border, Z.15.

Top leaf points to 3rd cinquefoil:

2nd, 3rd and 4th cinquefoils equally spaced:

Leaf close to 3rd cinquefoil, Z.1.

Leaf distant from 3rd cinquefoil, Z.24.

2nd and 3rd cinquefoils closer than 3rd and 4th:

Cinquefoils very close to colons, Z.2.

Cinquefoils distant from colons, Z.5. (Die break)

3rd and 4th cinquefoils closer than 2nd and 3rd, Z.18.

Top leaf opposite 2nd cinquefoil:

Top leaf points to border:

2nd, 3rd and 4th cinquefoils spaced equally, Z.7.

3rd and 4th cinquefoils closer than 2nd and 3rd, Z.22.

Top leaf points to 3rd cinquefoil:

Cinquefoils spaced equally, Z.19.

2nd and 3rd cinquefoils closer than 3rd and 4th, Z.10.

## Group 4, HAND OPPOSITE SPACE BETWEEN D &amp; E, AND UPRIGHT OF E.

Top leaf opposite space between 2nd and 3rd cinquefoils:

Top leaf distant from 3rd cinquefoil:

Cinquefoils spaced equally, Z.6.

2nd and 3rd cinquefoils closer than 3rd and 4th, Z.3.

Top leaf close to 3rd cinquefoil, Z.4.

Top leaf opposite 2nd cinquefoil:

Top leaf points to border:

IN spaced wide; right side of N high, Z.9.

INDE equally spaced on curve line, Z.12.

Top leaf points to 3rd cinquefoil, Z.13.

Top leaf below 2nd cinquefoil, Z.8.

## Group 5, HAND OPPOSITE SPACE BETWEEN D AND E.

Top leaf opposite 2nd cinquefoil:

Top leaf points to border, Z.11.

Top leaf points to 3rd cinquefoil:

Last cinquefoil distant from shield, Z.20.

Last cinquefoil close to shield, Z.23.

Top leaf below 2nd cinquefoil, Z.16.

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The photographs on the accompanying plate were made from 2.4 diameter enlargements of specimens in the author's cabinet, as an experiment to determine the merit of adopting Dr. Ross' classification. If the idea set forth by this earlier writer should be favorable accepted by current specialists in the field of Early American coins, a new plate will be made using the best specimens available, as well as adding to it the two missing dies, Z.20 and Z.25. In that event, it would appear more systematic for the text of any second edition of STATE COINAGE OF CONNECTICUT to carry descriptions of the Z dies in the same order in which they appear on this plate. In other words, should we use the Ross taxonomy rather than the Hall-Miller sequence?

The latter's long established and numismatically accepted numerical designations for these dies would not be changed under any circumstances. Miller's sudden death in the very next month following publication of Ross' article probably precluded his adoption of the better plan. All we know is that Miller did change around completely Hall's identifications of the many obverse 33's. But for some reason or other he left undisturbed Hall's classification of the paired reverse Z's.

Dr. Hall expressed a significant note of caution to those attempting to attribute an unknown Connecticut suspected of having a Z reverse. His words bear repetition here:

"In classifying Reverse Z, care should be taken to determine the final letter as a B, this being the only distinguishing characteristic from Reverse hh, in which the final letter is an R. In some varieties the lower horizontal line of B was lightly cut and does not show upon worn specimens; in others the final letter was made with an R punch altered. No varieties are here described except from specimens with the B sufficiently well marked to show the intent."



## ROSS' CLASSIFICATION OF THE REVERSE Z'S

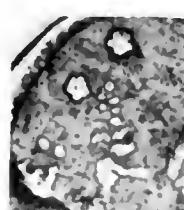
GROUP 1



GROUP 2



GROUP 3



Z 1



Z 24



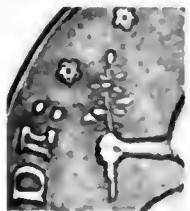
Z 2



Z 5



Z 18



Z 7



Z 22

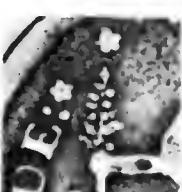


Z 19

Z 10



Z 6



Z 3



Z 4

Z 9



Z 12



Z 13



Z 8

Z 11



Z 20



Z 23



Z 16